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may 16th 2002 [55.01]

waiting for the punchline for 54 years

[are you feeling cheated?]

[it's okay. summer's coming]

suzanne beaubien and horia coman fakin' it

It's not easy being green

The federal government's Kyoto conundrum

The Bush administration's refusal to ratify the Kyoto Protocol led some Canadian foreign affairs ministers to rescind their enthusiasm for what at one point seemed a brilliant idea. In true Canadian fence sitter style, some want to sign and some don't.

Industry Minister Allan Rock was the first to be influenced by the American decision; he wrote a confidential letter to other federal government employees appealing to their fear of being swallowed economically by the booming US. Shortly after receiving the letter, Natural Resource Minister Herb Dhaliwal voiced similar concerns over signing such an agreement. "Government should always look at contingency plans," said Dhaliwal in a *Globe and Mail* interview last week.

Rock and Dhaliwal see more benefit in keeping environmental policies national. This may be to facilitate change and rule bending as needed to maintain Canada's appeal to foreign big business. Pledging Canada's environmental commitment globally and legally puts Canada at a potentially disastrous economic disadvantage to the United States. The latter could then capitalize on huge business steering clear of environmental restrictions, in the true north strong and free of big business. That business would steer its dollars into George Bush's pocket, leaving the Canadian federal government holding the bag.

European leaders are not happy. According to Swedish Environment Minister Kjell Larsson, "No individual country has the right to declare that a multilateral accord is dead." Unfortunately, the US does not need permission; they just go ahead with it whether we like it or not. And we don't.

Larsson spoke at the meeting held in Kiruna, Sweden, at the end of March. He and other colleagues decided to send a team of persuaders to negotiate with Bush on American soil. European environmental activist groups and allies sought to boycott American oil companies at one point, but EU leaders warned against this plan. To isolate or alienate the US would demolish any small hope there may have been of convincing them to come on board.

The Kyoto Protocol, established in 1997 in Kyoto, Japan, aimed to commit developed nations to reducing their carbon-rich gases by approximately five per cent by 2012. This collective effort to sustain the environment seemingly fostered a heightened sense of environmental accountability, but suspicions rose when the US government started to explore loopholes to facilitate the needs of big business.

What does all of this mean for Canada? We must decide for ourselves what is in our best interest. There are, at the very least, two interests to consider: the interests of Canadians at present and the long-term interests of future generations. Looking at the economic situation and thinking in terms of immediate gratification and the prevention of a slump, we are better to discard the Protocol and establish our own superior system for diminishing carbon-rich gases from the environment. However, big-picture people are of a different mind. If we picture the smog in which our children will play, the cancers of the body that will be injected with greenhouse gas fuel, we are wise to sign the Protocol and suck it up. What might hurt for a while could be our saving grace. Of course the other aspect to consider is that upon signing the Protocol, with the knowledge that the United States will not, we enter it knowing we still may end up green but poor, breathing in the fumes that waft over the border. The only green the US seems concerned with at this point is the green with a US President's face on it.

The conundrum continues. Fence sitters nationwide are duelling it out. The decision to be made is not a simple one. It does not just come down to environment versus economy but is also an issue of sovereignty. Sadly, it forces Canada to admit that we may be more dependent on the US than we would like to believe.

Editorial topics are decided on by staff at editorial meetings. Editorials are written by one or more staff members, and are not necessarily the opinion of all staff members.

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Israeli refusenik speaks out on occupation

by Leigh Phillips

Staff Sergeant Elad Lahav, a 27-year-old officer in the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) who refuses to serve in the occupied territories, spoke May 12 to a packed hall of over 100 at Camosun College.

At press time, 455 Israeli officers and soldiers have similarly refused to participate in the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory. Together with the 60,000 Israelis who marched in Jerusalem against the occupation and the settlements on Sunday and the 15,000 who marched in Tel Aviv last month, the refuseniks – as they are called – are putting the lie to the myth that all of Israeli society is united in support of the Israeli government's actions and are often paying with their freedom for the stand they are taking. Elad Lahav had been released from jail only a week before his visit to Canada. Forty-five others have been similarly jailed.

photo by Graham Winterbottom

Israeli Refusenik Elad Lahav raises his hands to the sky while making a point.

Introduced by Bobby Arbess of Victoria Jews For a Just Peace and Debbie Yaffe of Victoria Women in Black, the meeting got off to a raucous start with the moderator wielding a megaphone and giant bright orange mallet borrowed from CUPE, in case anyone had any thoughts of causing trouble.

The moderator's humour immediately put most at ease, but the sensitivity of the subject matter was highlighted by the one person who did attempt to disrupt the meeting – an elderly Holocaust survivor. The man began shouting before Lahav was to speak, but was gently persuaded by the audience to take his seat after the moderator offered him two minutes to address the crowd.

Lahav is from a town near the northern border of the Gaza Strip and grew up in Tel Aviv, where he had always been part of the Israeli peace movement. For him, there was no contradiction between being part of the peace movement and serving in the IDF – he supports the existence of Israel and her right to defense. It was only after having served in the army for a number of years that he realized what he was doing was not defending Israel but oppressing Palestinians, and in doing so actually causing Israel and Jews great harm.

When he joined up, Lahav "didn't feel it was fair to take a nice, cushy desk job," he said. "So I joined the infantry corps in southern Lebanon and was told that by being there we were defending Israel. But in 2000, I stayed up all night just to see the last tanks leave (Lebanon)."

A civilian since 1997, he still has to serve in the reserves for one month every year.

"I served twice in the occupied territories," Lahav said, "but even though I was a peace activist, there were things I didn't realize." For any soldier who refuses to soldier on, there is a single incident that breaks him, sometimes brutal, sometimes just heartbreaking. For Lahav, it happened at the Raffa refugee camp on the Egyptian border. "I saw barefoot Palestinian children playing soccer with a stone," he said. "It is the image I have carried with me ever since."

But Lahav still did not refuse to serve, thinking that after the Oslo agreement Israel was bound to leave the territories. "It was just a matter of time," he said, "so there was no reason to cause any problems."

Then in September 2000, the second intifada started. Serving in Nablus, Lahav "saw what an intifada is for the first time."

"We had to set up roadblocks," he said, "where we would search Palestinians and take their IDs to make sure they weren't on any wanted lists."

The roadblocks ensure that a trip from Ramallah to Jericho – a trip that normally takes only an hour – takes five. It is a daily harassment and humiliation for the Palestinians at best. At worst, which is common, people die waiting at a roadblock to get to a dialysis machine or in an ambulance.

"And we also had to scatter demonstrations," Lahav said. "Whenever there was a demonstration, we had to stop them before they got to a settlement. There would be thousands of them demonstrating and throwing stones," he said. "I don't blame the soldiers. I blame the army and government that put them there. You fear for your life when so many rocks are thrown at you, so soldiers fire. But to fire at children?"

"Then in January of this year, I heard of a group of officers who had signed a letter refusing to take part in the occupation. I signed the petition but I still could not find it in myself to refuse to serve."

In February, Lahav learnt that seven soldiers had died at a roadblock. "This was not unusual," he said. "But it was a roadblock in the middle of a creek, which is the worst position for a military outpost. It is undefendable. So the minister of defense had ordered it removed, but the nearby settlements forced the roadblock to stay. And so these seven soldiers died for the settlements."

After this, Lahav called his commander and told him he could no longer serve. His commander was sympathetic but said, "In a democracy, you have to do what the majority orders you to do." Lahav answered, "I don't remember the Palestinians ever getting to vote on whether they wanted to be occupied."

Lahav said half his company supported him and the other half didn't but understood his reasons.

He was immediately tried by his commander and sentenced to 28 days in jail, where he read Plato. He found that Plato instructed his students that it is better to suffer injustice than to perform injustice.

While he has not had his life threatened for his stance, many of his friends have.

"My heroes are my grandparents who are Holocaust survivors," said Lahav at the end, during a question and answer session. "The Nazis destroyed my grandfather's legs in a labour camp and afterwards he still forced himself to walk to work every day. We should never let the Jews be victims to such actions ever again, but we should also never let it happen to anyone else."

The final questioner asked Lahav if he had any hope. He replied, "I've lost most of my hope. There's a possibility that I will be called up and I will refuse to serve again and go back to prison."

Lahav received a standing ovation from the crowd.

UVic professor provokes debate

by Leigh Phillips

If you're the sort of person who finds the CNN and *National Post* coverage of the Middle East and "America's New War" as balanced as a hippo on a trapeze, you might already have visited the Electronic Intifada Web site (www.electronicintifada.net) to counter the most recent reports from Southam News.

If you haven't, you should. The Electronic Intifada has quickly become the premier source of alternative on-line news from the region. While its focus is on the Israeli incursions into the occupied territories and attacks on Palestinians, the site is certainly no friend of the corruption and brutality of the Palestinian Authority (PA).

And one of the site's four founders is UVic anthropology professor Dr. Laurie King-Irani.

After five years working as a journalist in Beirut and a stint at *Middle East Report* magazine in Washington, King-Irani returned to UVic to complete her doctorate. At this point the cyber-revolution had barely reached Lebanon and she became wildly impressed with a wondrous newfangled thing called an e-mail discussion list.

Started in 1997, Freedom List was the first listserv devoted to discussion on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It was through Freedom List that King-Irani met the three others who would go on with her to found the Electronic Intifada web site.

The three were Ali Abunimah, a Palestinian graduate student at the University of Chicago and vice-president of the Arab-American Action Network; Nigel Parry, a British musician-programmer-jack-of-all-trades who had been the webmaster at Birzeit University in the occupied territories; and Arjan Al Fassed, a Palestinian-Dutch doctoral student who had done a lot of work in the West Bank.

Initially the four aimed their weapons at the Palestinian Authority.

"We were disappointed with the PA cracking down on democratic dissent," said King-Irani, "so we came up with the idea of doing a Palestinian version of [American satirical newspaper] *The Onion*. We were going to get people from the West Bank and Gaza Strip to send in satire, parody, anything humorous, and it still exists as part of the Web site, but these days there's not much to laugh about."

photo by Stewart Wood

UVic anthropology professor Dr. Laurie King-Irani.

In September 2000 the al-Aqsa Intifada began. King-Irani and her on-line colleagues decided to utilize the Internet, which was not in common use during the first Intifada, which began in 1988.

"We thought this way we could get information out unfiltered," she said, "going around the mainstream media ourselves.

"So we started doing myth vs. fact type stuff, issued action alerts and had deconstructions of the most egregious reporting, and we also highlighted reporting that was good."

The Electronic Intifada went live in February 2001 and quickly caught on.

"Within 48 hours over 800 people had signed up for e-mail updates," said King-Irani. "But it really took off after the Israeli incursions into the West Bank this March. People started to notice we were there. We began to be picked up by mainstream news outlets like *the Washington Post*, *the Guardian* and the BBC."

Then the proverbial dam broke.

"In April this year all the Palestinian Web sites were knocked out after the invasions," said King-Irani, "and so each one had all their visitors re-directed to the Electronic Intifada, increasing the traffic exponentially."

Unlike the Palestinian and Israeli Indymedia sites, the Electronic Intifada edits the uploaded content.

"We don't want rants," said King-Irani. "We only want corroborated eyewitness reports."

Despite their journalistic ethics, King-Irani and her colleagues had a lot of trouble at the start, being knocked off-line twice last year.

"You should see how much hate mail we get," she said. "Vicious attacks, death threats, telling me exactly how they are going to kill me and what they are going to do with my body parts.

"We get e-mails saying, after suicide bombings, 'Oh, ten more Jews killed – you must be really happy.' Which is horrible, because of course we're all totally against the suicide bombs. It's a criminal, repulsive strategy."

The Electronic Intifada has kept much of its focus on the violence of the Palestinian Authority.

"We're not pro-Palestinian, we're pro-human rights. We are just as harsh on the Palestinian Authority."

So far UVic has been tolerant of King-Irani's involvement with the Electronic Intifada.

"There's been no bad feedback from the department or on campus," she said. "Two of my students 'outed' me though, after surfing the Web, and they were both really happy to see it. But I don't raise it in class.

"I purposefully did not tell students about the Web site. They have to make up their own minds on the issue."

Summer job hunt blues

by Miranda Post

Finding a summer job is in many ways like pimping yourself out for a few months. You try to make the most money in the least amount of time in the least prestigious "entry-level" jobs.

From the moment classes are over the race begins with a gunshot. Classifieds come alive. Internet job listings shoot out from the page and translate into sparkling cover letters detailing why you are perfect for the job.

Then the side effects of the employment competition start. Interviews take place. Form rejection letters come in the mail or just don't come at all. Actual jobs outnumber job seekers as the sparkle and vigour of your appearance, cover letters and curriculum vitae (the flowery business word for "resume") fade, quickly.

Luckily for even the worst speller, inarticulate writer and nervous interviewee, job centres help the most hapless of job seekers. Worried about wages and labour legislation? Don't have a fax machine, word processor or Internet access at your finger tips?

Well, Hire-A-Student (HAS) Centres and job finders like The Career Shop are the right solution to the street-like exploitation of your hard-earned skills this summer. Though many provincial job placement programs like Youth Community Action were hacked by the provincial government in January, the Feds still have their heads facing the right direction when it comes to youth employment: forward and to the future.

"Hire-A-Student Centres resulted from a federal pilot program in 1968," says Truman Tremblay, one of the enthusiastic, bilingual student employees at the Hire a Student Centre in Saanich.

Tremblay embodies the centre's philosophy, in which students help students find summer employment. He knows the services HAS has to offer by heart. These include a labour exchange, info on federal and government youth initiatives and personal planning and job advice.

His biggest piece of advice for students looking for a job is "to have a well-written resume and appearance when applying for a job. Oh yeah, and come in and use the HRDC [Human Resources Development Canada] services that the office provides."

As of the first week of May, Tremblay had already helped a student find some casual labour, something he's proud of.

"About 80 per cent of the vacancies [that are posted here] are filled in a week," he said. "It feels great when jobs get filled."

Meanwhile Dickson Kent, an administration assistant at the Career Shop, uses humour to combat the "looking-for-work blues" that students may develop after a couple days of employment-seeking self-pimpage.

"We have about 50 million people come in here a day," Kent said. "Or at least it feels like it."

"You have to have a sense of humour in this job. Everyone uses it in different ways here," said David Alexander, a career counsellor at the Career Shop.

The Career Shop services about 100 people a day – their record number of job seekers in one day is 127. The Shop receives funding from HRDC and Workstreams, a local non-profit employment agency, and staffs six career counsellors and two administrative assistants.

The Career Shop is mainly a service centre for people actively seeking employment. While Alexander said the majority of the clientele is students, there are a lot of recently laid off provincial employees using the services the shop provides.

"There seems to be a lot more people in than last summer," he said.

But don't let that discourage you, because by golly you're smart enough, cute enough and doggone it, people like you.

The UVic Student Employment Centre was unavailable for comment by *Martlet* press time, but the centre is offering a seminar on May 22 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m. on searching for summer jobs.

UVic hikes admission requirements for September session

by Suzanne Beaubien

It's getting harder for hopeful students to get into the UVic community as admission requirements have been raised for the September semester.

Undergraduate arts and science applicants will now have to meet a minimum GPA requirement of 81 per cent, a full six per cent higher than 2001-2002.

Arts and science courses are prerequisites for most programs at UVic, with the exception of the computer science and engineering programs.

Academic Vice-President Jamie Cassels said there are several reasons why the admission requirements need to be raised for 2002-2003. In addition to the 12 per cent increase in applications this year, the rate of retention is the highest it has ever been. The rate of retention is the per cent of current undergrads who plan to return in September.

"Retention is a goal," said Cassels. "And we like to think that it's partly a result of the university's success at providing for its students."

Cassels said UVic will have more students in 2002-2003 than ever before and the new admission requirements will prevent UVic from growing faster than it should.

"Even with a cut-off of 81 per cent, we'll likely exceed our funded capacity by 700 undergraduate and graduate FTEs [full time equivalents]," said Cassels. UVic is funded for 13,821 undergraduate and graduate FTEs in 2002-2003.

Cassels said exceeding funding creates problems with waitlists, making it difficult for students to graduate in four years.

Admission requirements function as a prediction of the total available spaces and regularly fluctuate from year to year.

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A dynamic state of being

The hidden realities of single parent stu

by Mark Vardy

Four-year-old Desmond happily kicks a pine cone around in front of UVic's Center for Innovative Teaching. He runs over to his mother, Krista Roessingh, who is sitting on a bench nearby.

"Look at me, but don't watch me," he says and runs off to hide. Moments later, after Roessingh has declared aloud that she has no idea where Desmond could have gone, the sound of delighted laughter is tossed out from Desmond's hiding place, along with the pine cone.

Roessingh has just come frorn the computer lab in the Human and Social Development Building. Typically, she works on her computer at home after putting Desmond to bed, but today he accompanied her here.

As a single parent student, Roessingh tries to keep her schoolwork out of her son's life so she is able to focus on him when they are together. But sometimes the two overlap.

"Being a single parent is not necessarily an identity," says Roessingh. "But it definitely puts some perimeters on your lifestyle."

Amanda Prenger is a fourth-year English major and single parent to a five-year-old. After waking up early to get both herself and her daughter ready, going to school all day, picking her daughter up from the daycare centre, cooking supper and putting her daughter to bed, she is often so exhausted she falls asleep while studying.

"I wake up at 2:00 a.m. on the couch with a book open in front of me," she says. "When you have a partner you can have time off. But you can't do that when you're a single parent."

Both Prenger and Roessingh are in their mid-twenties. At that age, students typically have free time to devote to extra-curricular activities. But single parent students face time constraints and responsibilities on top of the pressures and concerns shared by all university students. They may be up all night with a sick child before an 8:30 a.m. exam, or they may be stressed out about how to pay increasing child care fees while also working to get a paper in on time.

Martha McAlister, director of the Family Centre, estimates that roughly 25 per cent of the units in the Student Family Housing Complex are occupied by single parents but she doesn't know for sure; the protection of people's privacy precludes keeping tabs on who's single and who's not.

The privacy protocol regarding how many UVic students are single parents is also in effect at the University's Office of Institutional Analysis. Thus it is also unknown how many single parents on campus are female and how many are male. Across Canada, though, only about 15 per cent of single parents are male.

"We would love to know how many parents are on campus, single or otherwise," says McAlister. "There's a belief that on campus all the students are the same."

She says single parents face extra strains and stress that other students don't often see.

"My daughter was sick," says Bernadette Huys. "She had whooping cough all last winter. Nobody wants to take care of a sick kid who's not theirs and you don't want to let anyone else take care of your sick kid. She was up half the night, almost every night, coughing her lungs out.

"She missed 13 days of kindergarten in a month. This was when I was taking 18 credits in an education program over two semesters."

If a parent misses an exam due to their child's illness, professors can choose to defer the examination.

Jamie Matten, B.C. chair of the Canadian Federation of Students, is also a single parent. She says the fact that the university leaves the decision up to the discretion of professors only adds to the stress single parent students face.

While UVic's Records Services has a procedure that allows deferment for "family affliction," the uncertainty of the outcome puts extra stress on parents. As McAlister says, "You have to be your own advocate, be willing to step forward and ask for help."

Both Prenger and Huys have had to take their children to classes on occasion.

"When I started university I didn't have any daycare," says Prenger, "so I'd have to bring [my daughter to class] if her grandparents couldn't baby-sit. I'd bring her books and paper and markers - she loves drawing."

Prenger says that her daughter is usually pretty quiet during her classes but in the middle of one psychology lecture she yelled out "Boring!"

Huys's daughter Maya, who is six, shares the opinion that lectures can be dull. After she attended a biology lecture with her mother Bernadette several years ago, she calmly stated, "Mom, university is boring."

On one occasion when Huys had to do a class presentation and couldn't get child care, she had to bring Maya.

"We went to the Curriculum lab and got a stack of [children's] books," she says. "I was doing my presentation – slide show, overheads, the whole thing – and I look up and Maya has turned around and is making total faces at this guy sitting way in the back of the lecture hall, and he's making faces back at her. That was it – I just cracked up laughing."

Huys, Matten, Prenger and Roessingh all say that professors have been understanding, but Huys thinks the administration could do more to accommodate their needs.

She graduated in December from UVic's new post-degree program in Elementary Teacher Education and says aspects of the program conflicted with her life as a single parent.

"In the first semester of the program I had two required evening courses two days in a row," she says. "One from 4:30 to 6:30 and the other 4:30 to 7:30."

On the days of her evening classes she also had 8:30 a.m. classes.

"I couldn't drop my daughter off at school or pick her up or cook her dinner. It made for a long, long day for her."

Margaret Robertson, director of Elementary Teacher Education, says she understands the situation single parents face.

"We are aware of the needs of single parents and try to schedule courses at times that parallel [their children's]

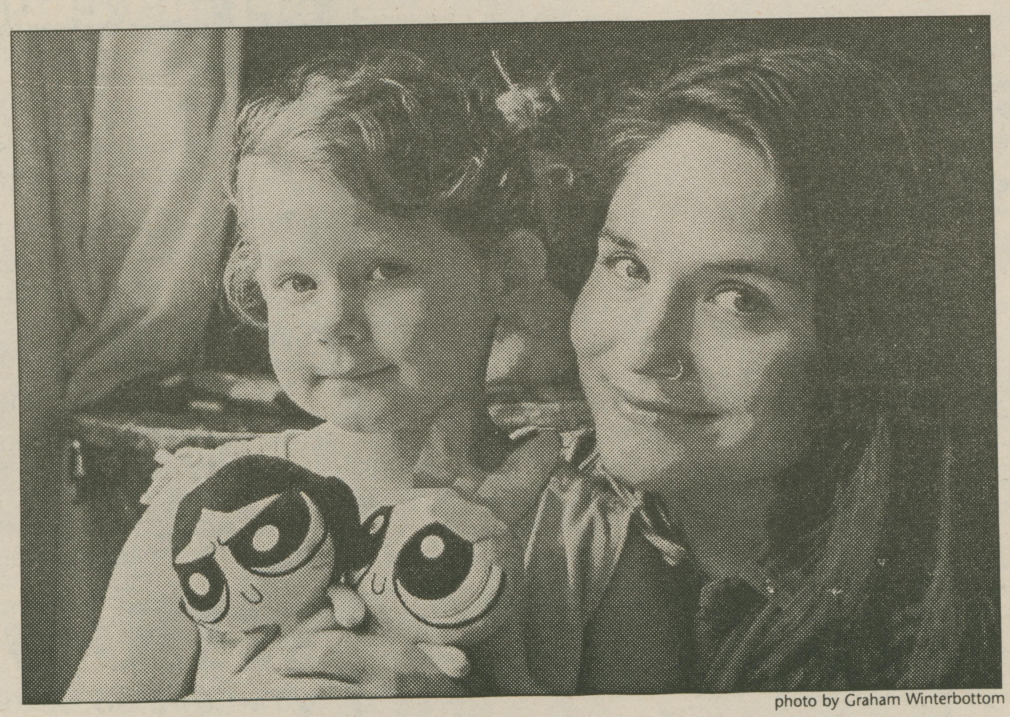


photo by Graham Winterbottom

UVic student Amanda Prenger with her daughter

ng

students

school hours," says Robertson. "But we can't always find instructors or rooms of the right size. We welcome parents into our program, we value what they bring, the extra quality."

Huys shares the opinion that single parents have experience that is applicable to academic environments. She says that her commitment to her classes and course work is strengthened by her needs to provide for a child.

Before she was a parent, Huys completed an undergrad degree at the University of Waterloo.

"There never seemed to be enough time," she says of her experience at Waterloo. "You spend it drinking beer and playing Frisbee, then staying up all night doing papers at the last minute." Now that Huys has a child, long-term career goals take priority over the social aspects of university.

Older single parent students also face other issues. When Sue Duffy left her husband of 16 years, unexpected issues came up.

"I had been very passive," says Duffy, "I had to learn new skills: assertiveness skills and parenting skills."

Single parent students may be up all night with a sick child before an 8:30 a.m. exam, or be stressed out about how to pay increasing child care fees while also working to get a paper in on time.

Duffy is now in her fourth year of a psychology degree. When she left her husband she had to upgrade to high-school equivalency before she could get into college. When she started school she was "dealing with the effects on my 11- and 13-year-old children of leaving a 16 year marriage," as well as dealing with it herself.

Duffy says she found a lot of support at the Single Parent Resource Centre, a local non-profit agency.

"They were invaluable, like a family. I didn't have any friends – all my friends had been [my husband's friends]. The Centre encouraged me to move forward when I was feeling totally discouraged and disillusioned."

Edie Copland, executive director of the Single Parent Resource Centre, says that it can be hard for older single parents leaving long-term marriages to go back to school for a number of reasons. She points out that their parents are not so much in a position to help as the parents of younger single parents are.

Older single parents also potentially have the task of re-forming their identity.

"They [older single parents] are still in the age bracket where marriage has a different meaning [than it does for the younger generation]," says Copland. "It's all coupled with self-worth. They may feel like, 'If I failed at marriage, then what can I do?' They may feel like they don't have a place anymore."

The question of child care is central to any parent attending school, but parents are now facing cutbacks in the support available to them. Lucille MacKay, manager of UVic's Child Care Services, says that the new provincial government is heading away from publicly funded child care towards a user-fee system. This "creates problems for both parents and child care providers," she says.

To help combat rising costs of living, the Ministry of Human Resources provides a child care subsidy to eligible parents. However, the subsidy doesn't measure up.

The subsidy currently available to a single parent who has one child and who is on the maximum student loan falls short by $229 per month of the amount charged by Child Care Services for a full-time daycare space.

Coming up with an extra $229 per month can be stressful for anyone; however, parents at UVic can access child care bursaries, which are funded by the UVic Students' Society.

Financial Aid recently gave out $13,000 worth of child care bursaries for the upcoming summer session, according to Director Lori Nolt. Another $30,000 went out for the winter 2001/2002 session.

Nolt says that almost everyone who applies gets something to help cover their child care costs, whether their child care is on or off campus, but single parents are under-represented in terms of applicants. She adds that not many single parents apply for the bursaries that are available to all UVic students to help cover tuition.

Single parent students feel the financial crunch on the employment end of things as well.

Michelle Kinney, director of services for the UVic Students' Society, is also a single parent. She would like to see the work of being a parent more widely recognized in the academic and employment fields.

"On transcripts you could have a little 'P' for 'Parent'," she says. "So people can recognize you have humongous time constraints, because that makes a difference to your grades."

One of the things that makes it easier to deal with the stresses of being a single parent is living in a supportive community. Prenger lives in the Student Family Housing Complex and says living there makes a big difference.

"I don't know what the rest of the complex is like," says Prenger, "but in my particular cluster everyone is really supportive. We often have potlucks and swap child care or baby-sitting. And there's lots of kids my daughter's age that she's friends with."

While being a single parent may reduce the amount of time a student can devote to studying, it may also bring qualities that employers seek. Kinney says that being a single parent has provided the opportunity to learn effective time-management and multi-tasking techniques. And Matten says, "I'm more driven because it's not just me; being successful has a bigger meaning."

"It's a bit of a struggle," says Roessingh. "One of my big values is to be at home with my son and have a strong and rich home life. I need to make the time away from him [going to school] really valuable because time with him is so precious."

Roessingh sits on a bench, watching Desmond entertain nearby students with talk about the daisies he is picking.

"Being a single parent student?" she says. "It's a dynamic state of being."

Mark Vardy is a single parent.

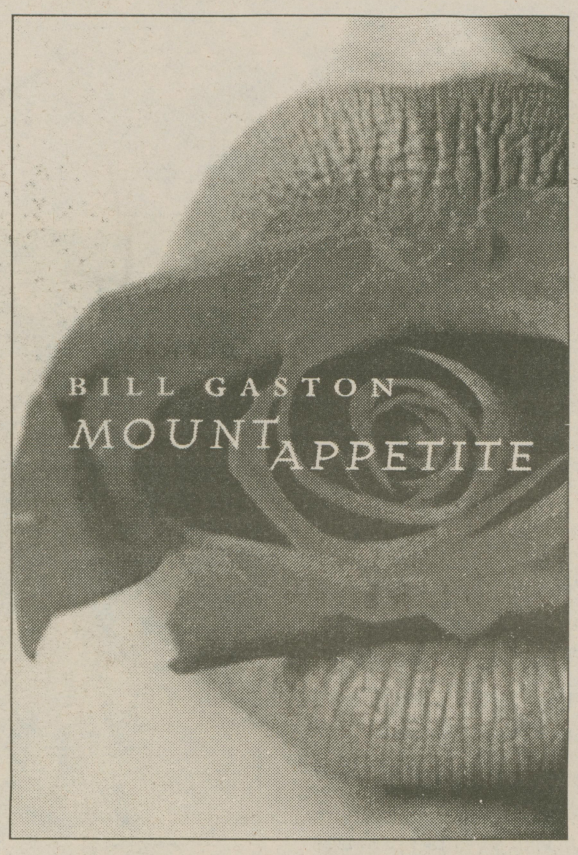
photo by Craig Battle

Danielle Smith-Moran and Mark at the UVic Childcare Complex.

Gaston reaches new heights

Mount Appetite
Bill Gaston
Raincoast Books 2002

by Suzanne Beaubien



Bill Gaston is the Canadian king of incomplete sentences. "Love, perhaps," he writes and I wonder: Maybe it isn't love after all. Just the idea of love being rolled around in the mind of his character and now in my mind too.

Sometimes he writes just one word. Alone. An idea. Teasing me. Making me desire more from him. From his characters. From *Mount Appetite.*

Open up the book anywhere and I find examples. "Tales." "Not surprising." "Or, whatever." These are direct quotes, not paraphrases.

Canadian writer and UVic professor Bill Gaston's latest collection of short fiction explores in a dozen stories what he has termed "Mount Appetite." He explicitly describes this metaphorical mountain in two of the 12 stories and suggests it in all.

While each story is wholly separate from the last, Gaston manages to weave the idea that desire is a mountain to be climbed throughout the whole text, connecting all of the unique stories. His characters' many and varied desires tease readers into the realization that we too are scaling our own Mount Appetite.

All of the 12 main characters deal with desires both repressed and indulged, and both known and unconscious. Like the uncle who tries heroin once with his junkie nephew to see what it's like to suck on Eve's breast, Gaston's readers are teased with these rich stories based on themes of desire and are left wanting another fix.

Several of the stories are so strong they seem to climb towards being made into novel form, the best example being "Mount Appetite," the last story of the collection and the longest. Composed of a series of letters from a father to his daughter's psychiatrist as he tries to reason his way out of administering cannabis to her, "Mount Appetite" fully defines Gaston's idea of desire.

"Mount Appetite is where I live," writes the father. "You live here too, only you have another name for it. You call it 'Desire' or something and you probably don't capitalize it, nor do you think of it as your home."

The man's daughter Felice is the most pure representation of this idea of desire. She clings precariously to the side of the mountain, her mental illness leaving her unable to decide whether to go up or down. In the end she makes her decision and "grabs truth, running."

While it's said that you can't judge a book by its cover, Gaston's new book is as satisfying to look at as it is to read. The sensual red rose clasped between a pair of perfectly painted red lips is suggestive of the themes of desire and self-seduction held within. It is a faint reminder that the main characters are caught between the moment of tasting and swallowing.

But take your time getting up the mountain. One story at a time, Gaston's new book is worth a read. Think about what your own Mount Appetite may be and realize that we are all junkies in our own way.

Devil Bunnies? What?

Donnie Darko
VHS/DVD, 2001
by Al Newton

Overall Rating: **** (out of five)
Pretension scale: **1/2

In the mood for cinema that rises above mainstream celluloid trash? If so, Richard Kelly's new offering *Donnie Darko* might be just for you.

Donnie Darko begins when slightly disturbed high school student Donnie (Jake Gyllenhaal) is visited by a demonic bunny rabbit with visions of the future. The bunny foretells impending doom and bookish, mentally unbalanced Donnie is left to sort out his newly discovered destiny.

The film includes a pointlessly all-star cast, featuring Drew Barrymore as a well-intentioned teacher and Patrick Swayze as a sleazy motivational speaker (the role he was born to play!).

Donnie Darko is half far-out 80s period piece and half sci-fi thriller. It maintains a balance between riotous humor – including a scene where Donnie tells his therapist about his sexual fantasies involving Christina Applegate – and complex science fiction.

The film makes no apologies for its strange twists and thinly explained plot devices but remains a meticulously crafted manic vision. Kelly employs a John Waters-esque sense of humour which delivers many good laughs.

The acting is solid, with the supporting cast playing their scenes like trumped-up elementary school theatre, creating a contrast to the gritty style of the film's stars.

Donnie Darko may seem overly arty at first glance, but don't be misled. The film seems to continually wink at the audience and is never unaware of its bizarre style and subject matter. This makes for a down-to-earth art-house film with a self-aware sense of humour.

The DVD edition features several interesting extras, including tons of deleted and extended scenes, a music video and a plethora of production information.

The film's soundtrack skips between 80s new wave (including Duran Duran's "Notorious") and a darkly enigmatic original score which pulses through the film, creating ambiance in scenes which might otherwise seem trite. Kelly's direction style rescues a film whose meandering plot and 80s-inspired satire might have sent it over the top.

Donnie Darko is a spastic and endlessly interesting parable about 80s high school life, the science of time travel and one evil bunny.

This one is a must for anyone with a taste for absurd, pseudo-sci-fi dark comic thrillers involving demonic prophet bunnies. I hope I'm not the only one.

The birth of the blockbuster, the death of New Hollywood

by Jeffrey Weston

How did the season of sunshine and exercise become the best season to be indoors watching movies?

It all started in the summer of 1975. In those days studios saved their big movies for the fall and summer ticket sales were the lowest of the year. Studios dumped their less-promising pictures into the theatres in the summer, knowing everybody was at the beach.

However, that summer Universal released a picture called *Jaws*, from an unknown director named Steven Spielberg. The film, about a great white shark terrorizing an east coast tourist community, looked like another summer flop.

Many critics view the mid-70s as cinema's second golden age. New directors were breaking away from the Hollywood studio system and making films that were radically different from the big studio standard. Among them was a group known as "New Hollywood," which included Spielberg, George Lucas, Martin Scorsese and Francis Ford Coppola.

These directors were masters of their movies. Using their own and major studio finances, they had almost total control over their pictures and produced some the most important films to date, including *American Graffiti, The Conversation, Taxi Driver* and *The Deer Hunter.*

Ironically, this cinematic renaissance was more or less killed off by two of these daring young directors. *Jaws* turned out to be a smash hit and the summer blockbuster was born. Two years later, in 1977, Lucas came out with *Star Wars.* It was another huge summer success and topped *Jaws* as the highest-grossing film to date.

Studios began to realize the potential of the summer season and by 1980 *The Empire Strikes Back, Urban Cowboy* and *Airplane* were all positioned to rake in money at the summer box office.

New Hollywood was collapsing. Lucas had created something he could not control and became trapped within the *Star Wars* saga. Scorsese flopped with his modern musical *New York, New York* and, although a great movie, his subsequent effort *Raging Bull* failed at the box office.

In 1979, Spielberg bombed with *1941*, his first film about World War II, and Coppola financially destroyed his own studio making *Apocalypse Now.*

The final blow came when United Artists gave Michael Cimino complete financial control over his 1980's *Heaven's Gate.* The film's $10 million budget ballooned to $44 million and bankrupted UA. The film only grossed $1.4 million.

Never again would a studio give a director such power over a movie. With ballooning film budgets, the major studios reeled in the independent directors and let the producers take over.

Jaws and *Star Wars* proved huge profits could be made from summer movies. In the 1980s executives saw sequels as a safe bet, regularly revisiting the *Rocky* and *Police Academy* franchises.

The 80s also saw the entrance of producer Jerry Bruckheimer, who specialized in high-concept films. These were easy to make, targeted to a specific audience and lucrative, and they included *Flashdance, Top Gun* and *Days of Thunder.*

The 1990s saw advances not only in special effects but also in marketing. Test screenings, focus groups, target audiences and demographic breakdowns are all used to shape the movies of today. Even Scorsese was forced to test screen his 1990 film *Goodfellas.*

The summer season has become so crowded with movies that it now starts in May and spills into September. The opening weekend gross makes or breaks a film.

Millions of dollars are spent on advertising just for the first weekend. Word of mouth, which helped *Jaws* become so big, is something now left to the video store. There isn't time to spread the word before the movie gets bumped out of theaters for the next big hit.

If a movie does not open big, it's labeled a "flop," and quickly forgotten.

It is now suicide to release an independent movie in the summer. Although sometimes you will stumble across a movie like last summer's *Ghost World,* it gets tricky to find it when *Spider-Man* is taking up half the screens in the Megaplex.

And independent filmmakers started it all. But you can't blame them for it. The studios fine-tuned the art of the blockbuster in order make huge profits and, as a result, today's independents struggle to get their movies seen.

Except for Lucas, who funds his own blockbusters. *Attack of the Clones* will be the biggest indie film to hit theaters since *The Phantom Menace.*

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Living the painterly lifestyle in Colwood

by Craig Battle

photo by Suzanne Beaubien

Craig Battle gets back into painting form and takes a brush at the camera. Luckily, no one was hurt.

That was Nick on the first day of the job. Standing on his toes on an overhang covered with shingles a storey-and-a-half from the ground, trying to reach and paint where the wall met the peak of the roof. His co-worker was small. Her name might have been Heather.

The two of them were stumped.

Mike, their boss, climbed up and assessed the situation. "Ah," his face said, as he pulled the ladder up and onto the shingles nearest the gutter. All angles pointed down, but problem solved. He turned to Nick as if to say, "Look. Piece of cake."

"It's my first day," Nick's face responded. "No fucking chance."

"Ditto," said Heather.

So Mike hopped on and tested the first few rungs and declared it safe. He asked Heather, in the absence of rope or nails, to sit beneath the ladder and hold it with both hands. Nick continued to paint. The paint was some colour between white and yellow, maybe Moonlit or Friar's Lantern.

But then the shingles let loose and the ladder fell and took Mike and Heather and the gutter and the paint with it. All five of them flew through the air and landed on the deck. There was Friar's Lantern everywhere, Moonlit on everything. The gutter didn't survive.

Mike and Heather landed more or less on their feet. Mike broke only his wrist, while Heather tore ligaments in both legs and took the rest of the summer off. Nick crouched on the overhang and wanted to go home.

Across town, in Colwood, I had just pulled my drop sheet out from under a bucket of white paint and spilled it across a cement walkway. It took a bucket of paint thinner and a box of rags to remove it.

It was about this time, maybe on the bus back to Oak Bay after work, I noticed the red spots on my hands creeping their way up my arms. I wanted to go home, too. Nick and I had just become friends, and already our lives were moving in unison.

We first met the previous semester in an English class. Nick made an impression right away. He was the one person I met all year that I didn't like.

It was something about him. Nick had bleached blond hair and a deep, slow voice and a complete lack of respect for all of us in the back row with no friends. He opened his eyes wide and looked around, completely disinterested, when he spoke. He, I thought, was taunting me.

The only thing he said in class all semester was how much he disliked Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress," but I often overheard him talking to the blonde girl who sat next to him. It was usually about going to the strip club or hanging out with his buddies. He was always name dropping his buddies. Chris this and Nuge that.

He then snubbed me the first time I went to a movie on my own. He walked past with a bunch of the aforementioned buddies, stared me down and looked away. Taunting me again, I thought. But it turns out he can't see in the dark without his glasses, so I was a single woman for all he knew.

Then, in the summer after first year, I took work in the Western Communities with College Pro Painting. The first job was to canvas certain neighbourhoods in packs and coax people into accepting estimates, free of charge or obligation. The boss called it cold calling, but we had to have speeches ready. Mine went something like this:

"Hi, my name's Craig Battle and I'm here from College Pro Painting. Have you heard of College Pro Painting? Well, we're a student-owned-and-operated painting company and we were just in the neighbourhood offering free estimates. No strings attached. Would you like one?"

Quite often I didn't get through the whole thing, but sometimes I added, "Please?" The speech yielded only 10 estimates in about a thousand cold calls. Most people simply said they weren't interested, one or two slammed the door in my face and others grew offended: "What? You saying my house needs painting?"

Then the impossible happened. Nick showed up for work one afternoon and I thought, "Man, can I not get rid of this guy?" But he was no better at it than I was, even though he claims he gathered seven estimates in a single afternoon, so we were all right.

It was on the days he and I worked together that we became friends. We wandered Colwood, combined our lack of business sense with our lack of knowledge about women and developed a single line perfect for both cold calling and picking up at the bar. "So," we growled. "You like Jay-Z?"

It wasn't long before Nick called me late one night, drunk, and "dropped" a poem on me. This was Nick's way. Back then his collection consisted mainly of poems inspired both by T.S. Eliot and his adolescence in Spain. One of them was about trains.

I represented my end and read a poem called, "Rubber Ravers," which was my signature piece for a while. I wrote it from bed one night in Nanaimo while listening to the new Donna Lewis album I bought my dad for his birthday.

The poem was about two people on the bus and how they didn't know each other, or that they could be happy together, and it ended, "He notices nothing, but her ass."

Nick was impressed. I can't remember much of what we said during those conversations but I do recall the word, "revolution." He said things like, "We're going to change shit," and "This is only the beginning." Nick wanted, and still does, to bring poetry back to the people.

He also wanted his picture on the cover of *Rolling Stone*. He had the date picked out, sometime in 2008, and everything.

But just then, that summer, we were painting. And what painters we were. Nick took a little while to get work, but I was on the job by the first of May. It took two buses and nearly two hours to get to Colwood, but I was on the job site by eight every morning.

The first thing my crew chief taught me was how to use the screwdriver. It had extra heads stored inside it and you had to twist the bottom to get them out. He looked worried. Next he taught me how to use a roller, how to use less paint and not splatter myself with it. I was raw, sure, but I had untold potential.

When I mastered the basics I moved onto things like ascending ladders with buckets of paint in my hands and scraping paint off windows with razor blades. I became adept at covering things with green tape. After a few shifts my crew chief let me work out of his sight.

I wore thin white cotton pants to go with my College Pro company shirt, and at the end of each shift I rolled my clothes with excess paint. The first few shifts we used white latex, but eventually moved into black stain. It took a few extra minutes in the shower each night to get the paint off my hands and thighs and forearms.

The rash emerged during the second week. I didn't know if I was allergic to oil or latex paint, or if it was something I was eating. The doctor gave me some cream and a box of surgical gloves, but neither helped. The gloves made my hands sweat, and coincidentally, were made of latex. The rash spread from my right to my left hand, and then up my arms.

Four weeks into my painting career, I retired. I returned to Nanaimo and Quality Foods for a third and final summer. Nick lasted into June but left when he discovered a fear of broken ladders. He then moved to Calgary and found work as a cook at Pizza Hut.

Nothing remains from the painting job. Not the beige tool belt or the painted clothes or even the rash. That cleared up minutes after I quit. But I'm living in Nick's apartment this summer while he works a bellhop job in Radium, and the other day I found his nametag from Pizza Hut. The name is peeling off, but it says, "Nick."

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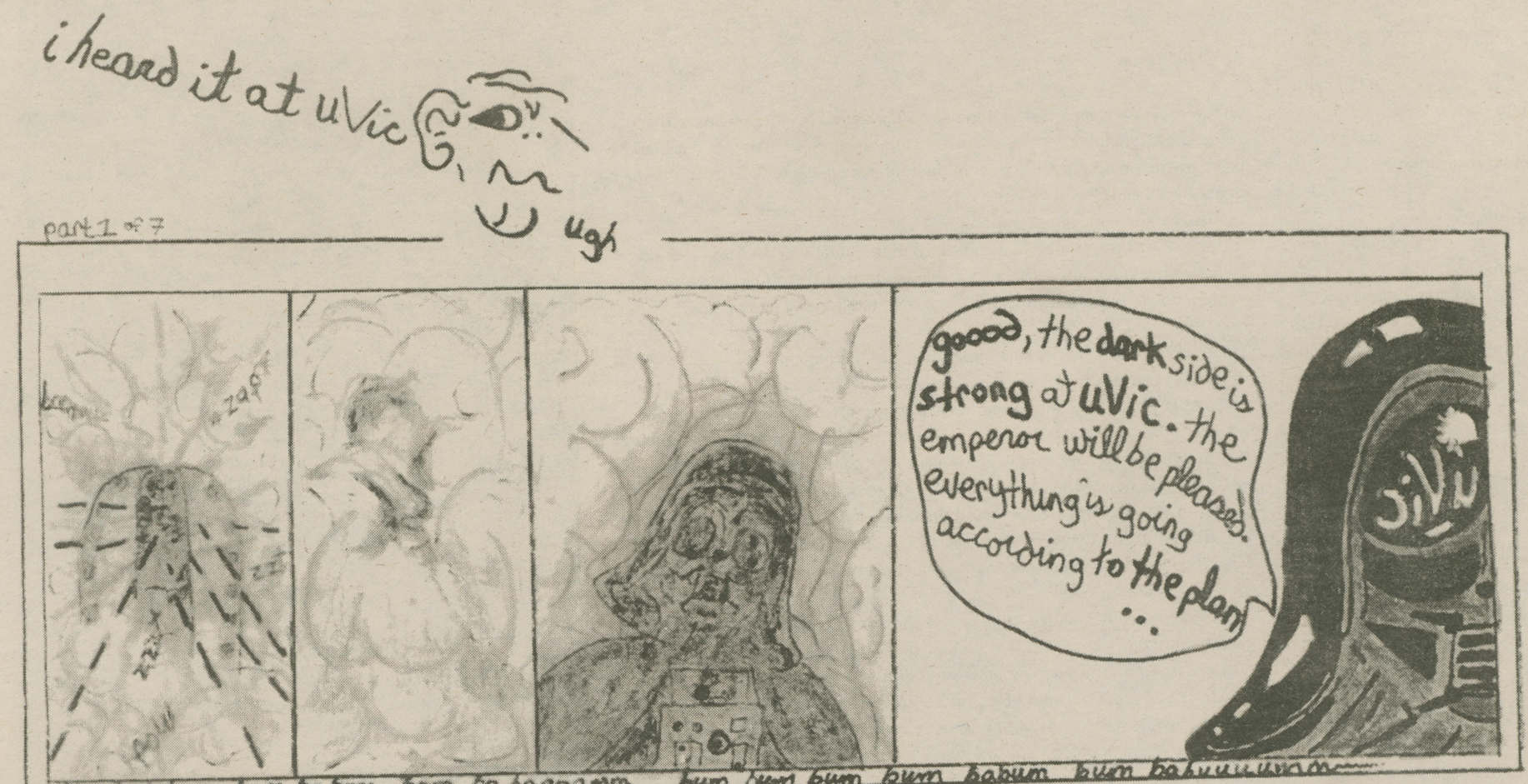
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